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WHEELS

1921

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"WHEELS"

1921.

(Sixth Cycle.)

EDITED BY

EDITH SITWELL.

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1921

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TWO MEXICAN PIECES.

"Ah, Que bonitos,
Son los enanos,
Los chiquititos,
Y Mexicanos."
—Old Mexican Song.

I.

SONG.

How jolly are the dwarves, the little ones, the Mexicans,
Hidden by the singing of wind through sugar-cane.
Out comes the pretty one,
Out comes the ugly one,
Out comes the dwarf with the wicked smile and thin.

The little women caper, and simper, and flutter fans,
The little men laugh, stamp, strut and stamp again,
Dance to the bag-pipe drone
Of insect semitone.
Swelling from ground slashed with light like zebra skin.

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Of insect semitone.
Swelling from ground slashed with light like zebra skin.

The little Cardinal, the humming-bird, whose feathers flare
Like flame across the valley of volcanic stone,
Like an arrow from a rainbow
That the armoured plants have lain low,
Stops to watch the dwarves as they dance out of sight.

Hair long and black as jet, is floating yet on amber air,
Honey-shaded by the shadow of Popocatapetl's cone;
Their fluttering reboses
Like purple-petal'd roses
Fall through tropic din with a clatter of light.

The crooked dwarf now ripples the strings of a mandoline,
His floating voice has wings that brush us like a butterfly;
Music fills the mountains
With a riot of fountains
That spray back on the hot plain like a waterfall.

Smaller grow the dwarves, singing "I'll
bring shoes of satin,"
Smaller they grow, fade to golden motes,
then die—
Where is the pretty one?
Where is the ugly one?
Where is that tongue of flame, the little
Cardinal?

II.

MATCHICHE.

The Mexican dwarfs can dance for miles
Stamping their feet and scattering smiles,
Till the Loud hills laugh and laugh again,
At the dancing dwarfs in the golden plain,
Till the Bamboos sing as the dwarfs dance
by,
Kicking their feet at the jagged sky,
That torn by leaves and gashed by hills
Rocks to the rhythm the hot sun shrills;
The bubble-sun stretches shadows that
pass
To noiseless jumping-jacks of glass,
So long, so thin, so silent and opaque
That the lions shake their orange manes
and quake;
And a shadow that leaps over Popocatapetl
Terrifies the tigers as they settle

Cat-like limbs cut with golden bars,
Under bowers of flowers that shimmer like stars.

Buzzing of insects flutters above,
Shaking the rich trees' treasure-trove,
Till the fruit rushes down like a comet, whose tail
Thrashes the night with its golden flail;
The fruit hisses down with a plump from its tree
Like the singing of a rainbow as it dips into the sea;
Loud red trumpets of great blossoms blare
Triumphantly like heralds who blow a fanfare,
Till the humming-bird, bearing heaven on its wing,
Flies from the terrible blossoming,
And the humble honey-bee is frightened by the fine
Honey that is heavy like money and purple like wine,
While birds that flaunt their pinions like pennons
Shriek from their trees of oranges and lemons,

And the scent rises up in a cloud, to make
The hairy, swinging monkeys feel so weak
That they each throw down a bitter cocoa-
nut or mango.
Up flames a flamingo over the fandango;
Glowing like a fire, and gleaming like a
ruby
From Guadalajara to Guadalupe
It flies,—In flying drops a feather
. . . And the snatching dwarves stop
dancing
—and fight together.

NERO IN THE CIRCUS.

Down the steep cable, thick as a man's
thigh,
Foot after monstrous foot delicately
placing,
Walks the huge elephant. A dancer treads
His broad grey back, blows a kiss, strikes
a pose.
Across the gulfs of tinted sunlight float
His thin evaporated snatches of song,
And round the Circus fifty thousand faces
Silently drink the sight and sound.
" Oh, what an artist he is, what an
artist!
Oh, what temperament, what execu-
tion!
What white arms, what a soul, what
beautiful,
Beautiful hair! "

(I too
Have heard in the hanging beer-gardens, I
too,
In the violet nights of June, have heard
Minna von Barnhelm, weltberümte
Kornetapistonvirtuosin play

Puppchen and The Blue Danube. What a soul!)

He strikes his lyre and the arpeggios rise
Bubblingly, like the last-breathed cry
Of a woman drowning at night in a calm sea.
He sings Orestes and Troy burning—Troy,
Rosy and gold and beautiful—he sings
Jove in the form of beasts making strange love,
And in the form of a beast Actaeon slain—
Fur for the dogs and in the fur a man.

(And there was Minna, too, Minna von Barnhelm:
Through the kornetapiston moistly blew
A temperament—oh! the artistic one.
The handsome schoolboys she seduced! the bills
She left unpaid! the wine! the tempers!
The number of times she married and was divorced!
She had a soul. You know what artists are.)

The paid applause breaks out. Five
thousand strong
The young men rattle, and buzz, and
stamp their feet.
And the grave elephant patiently waits,
While Nero tunes his harp for a third
encore.

PICTURE BY GOYA.

It is a scene of murder elegant as
Some Déjeuner sur l'Herbe: (Oh, pied
musicians
Playing to silken queens and cavaliers!
And oh, the tall tubed hats and the black
coats
And rosy, rosy amongst them—
Bright living body at the funeral feast,
Memento Vivere—a naked girl!
With sun-drowsed revellers, and in the
grass
The country copulatives tumbling to-
gether . . .)
But here the sleepers bleed, the tumbling
couples
Struggle, but not in love; the naked girl
Kneels at the feet of one who hesitates,
Voluptuously, between a rape and a
murder.
Bandits angelical and you, rich corpses!
Truth is your sister, goodness your spouse.
Towering skies lean down and tall, tall
trees

Impose their pale arsenical benediction,
Making all seem exquisitely remote
And small and silent, like a village fair
Seen from the hill-top—far, far below.
And yet they walk on the village green to whom
The fair is huge, tumultuous, formidable. Earth
Lies unremembered beneath the feet of dancers
Who, looking up, see not the sky, but towers
And bright invading domes and the fierce swings,
Scythe-like, reaping and ravaging the quiet.
And when night falls the shuddering gas-flares scoop
Out of the topless dark a little vault
Of smoky gold, wherein the dancers still
Jig away, gods of a home-made universe.

SONNET.

I am numb through with the coldness of thwart men;
Not angry men, unconcerned or shy,
Scant of love, scared of loving, when
Most kind most cabinned—apart in marriage tie.

Men are the white dissevered weary stars
Of stern stone martyrs round cathedral gates;
They are miner's lamps, captives cooped with bars
Of own fashioning, foiled with mean hates.

Yet love, here and there, can master and mock
Impediment, flies free, sings and wings
Wild and strong. Idly; for others lock,
Block still their lives, and hindered heart wrings.

Love cries low by wilderness ways. Where
Is hearing, harbouring love; hospitable air?

DESIGN FOR A PRINTED CALICO.

" Well caught! Don't pretend your fluttering strips of paper fingers, phosphorescent in the gape of the shrubbery didn't signal ' catch me ' across . . . ."

" Go and get sober, your nostrils twitch, old Aegipan. Across that green lacquer tea-tray of a lawn, these lanterns burning with straw flames that rustle are discreet for young lovers. Your neck and breast are as white, as mordant, as unslaked lime."

" You hobbled as you ran, podagra."

" Chalky white; I'll stain them with my kisses into the violet-dappled convex of a cypripedium. Now I feel your hair brush me, a mere whisper of a thunderstorm hull-down behind the moon, you . . . ."

" Take your hands off! You hurt with your black nails."

" Too late! I've got you! . . . . Now the little fool is fainting. Why is she like that? Look! it's all wires and wood and cardboard; she twangs like a banjo; look at the sawdust running out of . . . . What a trick to play an old man after supper; pulling a marionette to pieces. I'll have this piece as a scuvenir—paille de riz—champagne-colour. This sawdust is worse than snuff. The orchid in my buttonhole is as limp as a burst balloon. I'm afraid of this cypress, it's made of tin! It might twang. Let's have some champagne and go and see the fireworks."

QUADRANT.

The policewomen stand under the Georgian arcade

On the lookout for poor polls who stop to adjust a garter or have a joke.

Spoiling our fun, can't stand a girl a drink nowadays.

Under the arches of soap coloured plaster they huddle awkwardly like faded wax mannequins,

A foreshortened group in doleful indigo, shrinking from the observant lamps, white cherries floating in the vinous liquor of night.

In that sallow arcade staring with sunken jaws and eyes,

They recede on one another looking sternly at the poor polls.

SUBJECTIVE ODYSSEY.

In the cool of evening
I and myself go voyaging,
Seeking a ghoul-grotesquerie, a sublimated
Intensified paradisal Piccadilly
Circus with its half-past-one-a.m.
Denizens—doxies and drabs
And rubber-heeled custodians of the woe
That world-wide mediocrity has made
In its own blear image
And christened after Christ.
(You may think that silly
But you can't blame *them*.
After all, Christ came
To save the silly.
At present, true, he has not quite
succeeded:
More time, of course, is needed.)

The soul goes voyaging,
Barbor's off on a new spindrifty tack.
The damned chill spray
Can't wash high hopes away.
Anon he's scouting
For brazen butterflies or moths of steel,

Flapping with his coat o'er the meads of self-esteem,
'Neath the blistering sun—
The cynic son-of-a-gun.
See, he brings down one,
A fluttering, frail
Trifle of steel and vigour
(Dreams made them so, crystal-hard,
Whereas hopes and abstractions puff up, bigger and bigger,
Till they rival footballs, mattresses, or the necks of German bankers).

This captivating captive,
Trifle of steel and vigour :
One can't be cruel—or wise—
And pinch her dead with a sharp accurate surmise,
So away she flies,
And while she flirts in the luminous air and flits
In such wise
That amazement on our cousin Barbor sits,
I tug his coat-tails, point him over the way
Where the light is gay
On the tavern, and men make better company

Than these tenuous forms, fancy-born, that
only fancy
Inhabits.

Love's a good game
For winter evenings—or spring or summer,
But tame
For ever and anon. The apogee
Stales. Desire is " up a tree."
Nought's left but to take a cab to infinity,
But Necessity
Warns you to put a luncheon-basket under
the seat
Since bore and bored *must* eat.

But hang infinity—
I'll stay awhile in the tavern here with me.
My *alter ego* leans across the table
Asking the inveterate question, " What is
yours? "
As if I'm able
To state a case for Casualty!—
The malign decrepit bar-tender who pours
Red wine or white,
Illusions bright,
Or bitter tincture of dead and rotten hopes
Into my cup.

While inclination gropes
In the littered pigeon-holes of memory,
Deciding how I'll sup,
I lose the comfort of good comradry,
For Barbor lounges intently over the way
To a white-avised, stray,
Gay girl. And loneliness distils
Nostalgic chills
About me as the mists close on the hills.

Sight and sense
Barter disdain for folly's recompense.
The old hunt begins again all over :
The dogs'-eared pages are re-read from
cover to cover.

" What then, crawl all your days
" Along these dismal ways,
" This vicious circle too small for vice to
circle,
" This *via media*, this mean parade? "
Contends Myself,
Coming back from the girl with the gleam
of contempt in my eye,
And I am fain to reply :
" Take up your trade.

" A bout of work'll
" Soon set things right.
" A hammer drowns women's chatter,
" They can't abide the clatter! "
Thus I and *alter ego*
Fall into step and walk through the night,
And in the morning greet the new-risen
sun—
The intemperate son-of-a-gun—
With a grin that mocks the affright
Of overnight.

ABERRANTRY.

Go forth, my song's antithesis,
Make a loud claim, acclaim your claim
Beyond the Word's periphrasis.
Perchance unwisdom, sensing this,
Shall turn again Whittington-wise
And, with indefinite surmise
Born of impertinence, find tame
Toys modelled of logic and of sense—
Mechanic toys that toy with sense
As with a painted cocoanut
Carved to the feature of its butt.

Pay her no homage. She'd reject
Homage, since homage came of age
And struts and fawns and apes a rage
That simian prototypes affect.

Nor ask what you would have. She turns
Grief to a grin and grins to growls,
Twirling the whirligig bright prism,
And while Sir Malkin throatily howls:
"Mi-aw, Mi-aw, my own adored,"
Trolling his pussy-catechism,
He far outleaps the solecism
Which solely reason can afford,
She tweaks his love twixt thumb and finger
And, lest the enamoured dolt should linger,
Shouts "Candid appeal is like candied peel,
Best served on trifles."

If you feel
Barbs in the flesh, thorns in the quick,
Leave the jade, ply your zany's stick
On your own back. Time's tick-tactic
Warns: "Down the ages all the sages
Have found no sauce to season geese;

The season's salt is ennui's surcease;
And holidays, throughout the year,
Fall only when the coast is clear."
(No sooner is the last guest gone
Than we skate over the rubicon
Of frozen tea and well-iced cake,
Avoid the vastily-void abyss,
That afterteaish mood; we hiss
High over depths or shoal. The lake
Grunts to our passing as if drunken.)

Dues of a mate are dews of death
When proferred vainly. There's a sunken
Snag in her wit that wrecks your barque,
Bark as you may. For all your baying
If she's your quarry, you'll make no
maying.
A saffron-yellow soul is hers,
And yellow stands for buttercups,
Butter melts in his mouth who sups,
Runs sleekly, too, as run his words
Together when her image occurs
In his imagining.

Dead birds,
Quotidian gifts of happy hue,

Piled at her feet, she deigns to view
Never. Jewels tossed in her lap
Vainly implore a kindlier hap.
Content she laps the fools' abuse—
A puss in comfortable red shoes.
(Red riding hoods are cosy wear
On winter nights when knights of cheer
Go wandering on little steeds
That clop-a-clop through fancy's meads.)
And, only fancy! here's a knight
On bended knee, devout, his plight
Is manifest, his needs shine bright.

Sometime, praise be! the times will
change:
Fate will kindle her cooking-range
And goose-flesh will smell kind in the nose;
The white-avisèd moon will doze
Quiescent over the hills or ply
Her traffic in the leaves: adown the sky
The hothead, fat, precarious sun
Will take it in his head to run:
Imagination bolder grown,
Will reach through twilight's bars to catch
The winsome wench all goldy-brown,
And prison her in his booby-hatch.

PARADE VIRTUES FOR A DYING GLADIATOR.

For safety, hear this, common mortals!
March with the others—swing your arms,
Don't step too fast—don't reach so far.
. . . . Laggards are devoured by wolves :
if you but reach the enemy first
an eagle from the iron air
will soar steep down, and peck your eyes.
Be the first to steal down fire,
and you shall lie on the aching rock,
a threatening wing your roof and shade.

The scaffold stands and totters in the wind
a cage for the light—a platform through the clouds :
remark—a scaffold and a scaffolding :
a terrace for death—and bars for young birds.

At the top he stoops to work :
the shadows give him longer limbs,
he strides on stilts to tie the ropes,
only string can hold the floors

and keep the telescopic roofs apart.
A little rubbing of dry hands,
snatches of sawdust on the floor,
then he nods for the fanfare like a god.

A screech of trumpets—before we guess,
before we know what he stands there for,
the planks split up, they bend like rushes,
the frightened birds fly off, he tumbles,
falls through the brittle lights that snap,
and give like waves when a meteor falls.

They flood the arena—cover the sands—
The beakéd war-boats raise their sails,
like birds they tack in the wind;
The second philosopher appeared,
proudly holding a ladder.
" Wait," he was saying, " till we're near
enough,
then watch me making for another world."
He did not climb. He lined the deck.
The sailors helped him, charged with their
ram
the other ship was staggered, helpless.
They lay alongside, near enough,
over with the ladder, he climbed along.
His little weight decided things,

the two boats went apart, the hooks,
the claws of his ladder were wrenchéd out,
he lay like a man between wild horses.
One arm came off, and then a leg.
They picked him into a boat, rowed off,
drained out the water, and when the sand
was dry,
there he lay close to the other,
the two philosophers together again.

The third put up a horn to his mouth.
" I deny," he roared, " a better world,
but I hope a stranger, not a nicer heaven.
Also your fault—and not my choice."
And then he disappointed the crowd,
fell, like a log, without one struggle,
killed by poison, drunk in secret.

" As my turn," the fourth man shouted,
" I'll walk on stilts through the drying
water,
collect the bodies, carry them out,
and give them to the crowd for burial."
Then he began tremendous tests,
beat one stilt with an axe to break it,
looked through the eyeholes of his visor,

bared an arm to feel his sword.
Then on one leg his whole weight leaning
he strapped his other leg to the stilt,
knocking it on to a wall to test it.
Both legs finished he cannot stand,
he has to stamp and stagger around,
a tireless peripatetic.
They hand him helmet, sword and trident,
and, last of all, the trumpet that he holloes
down.

Now he is ready to start, steel clad,
and shod with hoofs of sounding wood.
He grips the trumpet with his teeth,
bares the trident, holds the net.
The first he comes to still is breathing.
He lances him with the trident, lifts him,
opens the net for the crumpled body.
The second man, legless, armless,
lies there helpless.
Little is left for the wide-tongued trident.

The man who drank the poison, died,
but still the venom lives within him.
He is spiked with the same three lances,
and the same points transfixing both,

killed the other who was breathing,
but being limbless could not move.
The weight of the two together stifled,
strained, and made this gladiator gasp—
To right himself, he must stand still.
He stumbled, drew to his height,
and fell.

Next we saw one stilt come out,
and wave above the shallow water.
He disengaged it, dropped it off.
The other leg was doubled up,
but he could sit knee deep in water,
and use the floating stilt as a crutch.
His trident stuck up out of the sand,
the visor and the trumpet still were his :
helmet for head, and tube for voice,
enough material for martial music.

The drums were rattling for his death,
but there he sat, and did not die.
He had the only pair of stilts,
and whilst the water ebbed from him
leaving this monster on the sand,
he can string out platitudes,
and make a dying actor's speech.

" How do we differ from dull soldiers? "
these were the words he started with—
" Where is the gulf for us to jump,
where are the stairs for me to climb,
so that I ride a horse, a cloud,
and rule the azure fields of air?

Why do I want these, is it vain
to try and open gates of glass?
They are transparent, is it vanity
that I wish for men to see me
ride beneath these gates, and glitter,
shine the other side from them?
Now they stand, where then I stood;
they see me where I nothing saw.
But when I came behind the glass,
the lights to show me, dazzled me;
now I grope through a golden fog.
I stumble on the beams as stones,
I never see the road I walked:
lamps blind me; blatant shouting deafens
me:

The more I stumble, more they cheer—

I suggest these virtues to all dying
gladiators.

Never bury your rival's bodies, let their
corpses taint the air;
do not put them in caves for the relic-
hunters,
but leave them to the vultures, they will
quicken the decay.
This Virtue I learnt, first, to-day.

Your enemies must feel both edges of the
sword;
they shall be laggards for all hungry
wolves;
and pray for the vultures if they die too
soon :—
this is why I build my house
using tombstones from damp fields;
that is why I said to-day
I'd gather the bodies and give them to you,
letting you dig and hide them yourselves,
and keep you busy, fill your minds,
so that while I stand in the glare
you watch me not, but grope with your
hands,
running the sand through greedy fingers.

Now I have light more prying than the sun,
no audience so nervous as the fainting stars
who gently withdraw, but watch behind
the dark;
none are there, spying.
So you see I have gathered my rivals,
given them over to you, occupied your
attention.
Now there is full light for me, and no
rivalry,
alone I can work my wonders, alone in my
own hours of day.''

But then he worked his own greatest
wonder,
his head dropped, knees sank, and he rolled
into the water.

That is a virtue, but not a parade one.
Soldiers should run away to live another
day.
Good as far as he went.
Good to gather and expose the corpses,
but weak of him to die, knee deep in water.
I should admire him more, sitting on his
box,

or washed ashore on a querulous hencoop.
This much I like, that he walked on stilts,
that the role he chose never let him stop.
That he could not stand, but must stamp
ahead.

It seemed to me, if my turn should come,
that I would not rake the sand, scour out,
and clear the threshold of the statue dust;
any more than build with the dead, mute,
stone;
that I would not snap the fallen swords,
or sharpen their points to help me,
neither slay the old, or build the new
religion,
neither beg the streets, or live on an altar.

Parade these virtues, dying gladiators!
Beware of the final, finishing copestone.
Hang many masks from your belt,
but the last one awkwardly stops your
disguise,
until you break the string, to take the
bead—
And tumble the walls of your Paradise.
If you cage your growing trees,

no birds will float through them and sing;
if there are walls, you cannot watch
the fields that slope down till they hold the
deep sea.
Between yourself and the waves there lie
all that divides and walls you in.
A Paradise is dangerous to hunt through
for the rare tigers among the tropical trees;
if you had never attempted this,
you had never been lying wounded now.

* * * * *

An icy wind interrupted this flow,
a fall of stage snow fluttered from the roof.
We were aghast to see the gladiator
rolling the snow in his trembling hands—
Not to soothe him—for the next scene was
a fight on sledges—
but the gladiator finished several handfuls
and then he threw them into the audience.
It was a very irritating dust,
it broke into clouds, till everybody sneezed.
So I took my hat and coat and went,
letting them sneeze and seeing them
weep—
and I turned this thought in my mind.

Surely the gladiator threw this snow
wanting their tears for two good reasons!
" First," said he " I'll have them cry;
their tears shall flow for my timely death :
secondly, their tears shall hide and veil
until with smarting they cannot see :
and then they'll miss my proud successor."

Naples,
17, xi. 20.

AN IMITATION.

" God, in the whizzing of a pleasant wind,
Shall march upon the tops of mulberry trees."

—*George Peele.*

I was lying in the dappled shade,
The lute hung lifeless in my lap,
When God stepped out of a moving cloud
To tread the tops of mulberry trees.

He hushed the trumpets, furled his flags,
And made his angels wave their wings;
Thus was blown the pleasant wind
That wafted him within my sight.

And when I saw him through the leaves,
I knew he trod his winepress there,
The nectar sliding from the mountains
Did not please him like those berries.

I touched my strings, and God looked down,
He smiled on me, and gave me wings,
But e'en His plumes had not the glow
The fire of fruit lit in the air.

All the while He kept his pace
And marched on in the whizzing wind,
I ran behind with feathered feet
And followed Him as best I could.

Had I gone quite far enough,
We should have reached to Black-man's
land,
Where ebon faces show out clear
Against the brooks and crystal waves.

But dying daylight told the hour
And warned me I had best turn back.
I wept at parting, then I smiled,
And knew the purpose of these plumes.

For with their help I bridged the air;
I perched upon the silent sill,
And from this height my lute will sound,
And I shall catch the whispered call.

Renishaw.

7.9.20.

ANOTHER IMITATION.

"God, in the whizzing of a pleasant wind,
Shall march upon the tops of mulberry trees."

—George Peele.

Can a white wave its coolness keep
And break beneath the hot sun's stare;
Will incense-trees for ever weep,
Or do they, too, our changes share?

Flowers climb on the trees but once
To cloud those Heavens with their stars;
The fountains need a melting ounce,
A load of snow, to start their wars.

The blossoms and the leaping springs
Ask for kindness ere they start;
An eagle grows strong with its wings,
And cannot prey without this part.

The wine lies in the grape until
A plucking hand can take its might;
Barred is the window, mute the sill,
Unless you climb to grasp the sight.

So, as I played my lute and sang
I saw God in the mulberry trees.
His angels clapped their wings. There
rang
A pleasant wind that bore the bees.

Still swifter to the flowers that flamed
And shone like lamps in deepest dark,
And all the unicorns we tamed
Ran to cool themselves and hark.

For God was singing as He went
Pressing nectar for His drink,
And for the coolness that this lent
The beasts came thirsting to the brink.

But I ran up the ladder fast,
Rattling the windows with my notes;
And as I played, a splendour passed,
And laughter on the wind still floats.

Renishaw.

7.9.20.

BAROUCHES NOIRES.

It was when I was sitting by the side of the lake,
By the side of a lake where the great trees come to the water's edge,
And when, beneath the glittering leaves, I was watching the gleaming, mobile water; the water that was like a thousand living mirrors in the sunlight, that I turned my head . . . .
I turned my head, amidst the green warmth, to the road,
And I saw a procession of old, frayed barouches filing by;
Old, broken-down barouches that followed their soundless horses soundlessly,
And contained loads of young dead people, propped up in outrageous positions;
Dressed in the clothes of many periods.
I saw four couples sitting in a row . . . . embracing one another . . . .
One couple had exchanged hats . . . .
The last barouche that passed had a placard tied on with string—
" We are the lovers that drowned themselves in this lake."

TWO BUCOLIC POEMS.

I.

ON THE VANITY OF HUMAN ASPIRATIONS.

"In the time of King James I., the aged Countess of Desmond met her death, at the age of a hundred and forty years, through falling from an apple-tree."

—*Chronicles of the Times.*

In the cold wind, towers grind round,
Turning, turning, on the ground.

In among the plains of corn
Each tower seems a unicorn.

Beneath a sad umbrageous tree
Anne, the goosegirl, could I see—

But the umbrageous tree behind
Ne'er cast a shadow on her mind—

A goose-round breast she had, goose brains
And a nose longer than a crane's;

A clarinet sound, cold, forlorn,
Her harsh hair, straight as yellow corn,

And her eyes were round, inane
As the blue pebbles of the rain.

Young Anne, the goosegirl, said to me,
" There's been a sad catastrophe!

The aged Countess still could walk
At a hundred and forty years, could talk,

And every eve in the crystal cool
Would walk by the side of the clear fish-pool.

But to-day when the Countess took her walk
Beneath the apple-trees, from their stalk

The apples fell like the red-gold crown
Of those kings that the Countess had lived down

—And they fell into the crystal pool.
The grandmother fish enjoying the cool—

(Like the bright queens dyed on a playing-card
They seemed as they fanned themselves, flat and hard),—

Floated in long and chequered gowns

And darting searched for the red-gold
crowns

In the castles drownèd long ago
Where the empty years pass weedy-slow

And the water is flat as equality
That reigns over all in the heavenly

State we aspire to, where none can choose
Which is the goosegirl, which is the
goose . . . .

But the Countess climbed up the apple-tree,
Only to see what she could see—

Because to persons of her rank
The usual standpoint is that of the
bank! . . . . ”

The goosegirl smoothed down her feather-
soft
Breast . . . . “ When the Countess came
aloft,

King James and his courtiers, dressed in
smocks,
Rode by a-hunting the red-gold fox,

And King James, who was giving the
view-halloo
Across the corn, too loudly blew,

And the next that happened was—what
did I see
But the Countess fall'n from the family
tree!

Yet King James could only see it was
naughty
To aspire to the high at a hundred and
forty,

" Though if (as he said) she aspired to
climb
To Heaven—she certainly has, this time! "

. . . . And Anne, the goosegirl, laughed,
" Tee-hee,
It was a sad catastrophe! "

II.

GREEN GEESE.

To Richard Jennings.

The trees were hissing like green geese . . . .
The words they tried to say were these :

" When the great Queen Claude was dead
They buried her deep in the potting-shed.

The moon smelt sweet as nutmeg root
On the ripe peach-trees' leaves and fruit,

And her sandal-wood body leans upright,
To the gardener's fright, through the summer night.

* * * * *

The bee-wing'd warm afternoon light roves
Gilding her hair (wooden nutmegs and cloves),

And the gardener plants his seedsman's samples
Where no unicorn-herd tramples—

In the clouds' potting sheds he pots
The budding planets in leaves cool as grots,

For the great Queen Claude when the
light's gilded gaud
Sings Miserere, Gloria, Laud.

But when he passes the pottingshed,
Fawning upon him comes the dead—

Each cupboard's wooden skeleton
Is a towel-horse when the clock strikes one

And light is high—yet with ghosts it
winces
All night mid wrinkled tarnished quinces,

When the dark air seems soft down
Of the wandering owl brown.

They know the clock-faced sun and moon
Must wrinkle like the quinces soon

(That once in dark blue grass dew-dabbled
Lay) . . . . those ghosts like turkeys
gabbled

To the scullion baking the castle bread—
" The spirit, too, must be fed, be fed;

Without our flesh we cannot see—
Oh, give us back Stupidity! " . . . .

But death had twisted their thin speech
It could not fit the mind's small niche,—

Upon the warm blue grass outside,
They realised that they had died.

Only the light from their wooden curls
roves
Like the sweet smell of nutmegs and cloves

Buried deep in the potting-shed,"
Sighed those green geese, " now the Queen
is dead."

FANTASIA FOR MOUTH-ORGAN.

I had a mother-in-
Law; no other kin
Could be so kind, said
He!
She worried till the bladder
Of my figure seemed a ladder,
And would try to cancel it.
She
Would wring me on the mangle
When the hot sun's jangle
Bent the North Pole to South and
The
Wind hyperborean

Dried the marmorean
Wash for a nominal
Fee.

But the wheezing wind's harmonium
Seemed an enconium
Of life when one is
Free.

And as life was getting barrener
I set out as a mariner—
The hero of this epopee.
I sailed on botanic
Gardens oceanic
Where siren-birds sip their tea,—
Past the lodging-houses lean
Where ozone like glycerine
Oozes. Loosely, wee
Horses age had tattered
Flap along the battered
Platform grasses (green Bohea).
But the ship and the narrator
Had traversed the equator
Before I knew that Fate's decree
Had seen fit to inflate
The mother of my mate
With the same wish as the refugee! . . . .
The South Pole floating past

Was taller than a mast—
The North Pole and the South congree
O'er the ocean of red horsehair
(Unknown of any corsair)
In the snow's cold ivory—
All smooth as a japonica,
In sound like an harmonica,
Where the humming-bird-quick lights flee
To the polar sea's pavilion.
We paid for twenty million
Red velvet drinks with only one rupee,
And in the central hulk
My mother-in-law's bulk
Sat reared upon the snow's settee.
Her jangling jet bonnet
(With the polar lights upon it)
A cathedral seemed, whose key
Was her nose, a horny cockatrice
Goggling out to mock at these
Sights; for each degree
Of the North Pole and the South
Had for bonnets, seas uncouth—
Electric fish that curl like a trochee
Are their lithe and writhing locks.
The redskins came in flocks
And pelted hairy fruitage from the tree.

Then we floated back toward
The equator; flat as sward,
And green as grass the water seemed to be.
Like a dulcimer or zither
Was the tinkling and the glitter
Of the icebergs as they floated aerily.
For on water soft as calices
That open, Crystal Palaces
Were those bergs of ice within whose
apogee
Were the queerest, brightest pictures—
Exhibitions with the strictures
Vanished from Infinity.
Then we traversed the equator :
And it was either Fate or
Whatever other Power is our pawnee—
But when natives with smooth joints
And features like gilt points
Of the starfish moon came, we
Saw their eyes like wrinkled tortoises,
And their hairs' black vortices
Whirl, as they sank upon one
Knee.
For when they saw
My mother-in-law,
They decided not to tackle
Me!

She is tough as the armorian
Leather that the saurian
Sun spreads on the
Sea—
So she saved my life,
Did the mother of my wife,
Who is more than a mother to
Me!

EARLY SPRING.

The wooden chalets of the cloud
Hang down their dull blunt ropes to
shroud

Red crystal bells upon each bough
(Fruit-buds that whimper). No winds
slough

Our faces, furred with cold like red
Furred buds of satyr-springs long dead.

The cold wind creaking in my blood
Seems part of it, as grain of wood.

Among the coarse goat-locks of snow
Mamzelle still drags me to and fro;

Her feet make marks like centaur-hoofs
In hairy snow; her cold reproofs

Die, and her strange eyes look oblique
As the slant crystal buds that creak.

If she could think me distant, she
In the snow's goat- locks certainly

Would try to milk those teats the buds
Of their warm sticky milk—the cuds

Of strange long-past fruit-hairy springs—
Beginnings of first earthy things!

PERPETUUM MOBILE:

A PANTOUM, MORE OR LESS.

Pilk lands the verse of Jobble to the skies,
And Jobble says that Bibson's Dante's peer
Bibson is great on Pagg,—" What art! "
he cries,
While Pagg is sure that Dubkin is a seer.

While Pagg is sure that Dubkin is a seer,
Dubkin swears Botchell's odes will never
wane;
Botchell commands: " Watch Pimping-
ton's career! "
Pimpington writes a book on Trodger's
brain.

Pimpington writes a book on Trodger's
brain,
And Trodger shrieks: " Glabb's genius
stirs my soul! "
Glabb raves of Cringely's rhymes with
might and main;
Cringely pens Gummit's name on glory's
scroll.

Cringely pens Gummit's name on glory's
scroll,
And Gummit sees in Sludd new worlds
arise,
Sludd bids us hear Pilk's mighty rhythms
roll;
Pilk lauds the verse of Jobble to the
skies. . . .

THE DEATH OF MERCURY.

To H. R. Barbor.

Dullness, the Deity, in conclave sat
With Mediocrity, whose pork-pie hat
Now flaunts, with intermingled asphodel,
The homelier herbs that "Georgians" love so well
—No Baudelaire flowers now shed exotic scent
But parsley, garlic sweet, and peppermint.

These Goddesses love England, where alone
Is Dull praise given to their Duller throne;
And as, in state, they to their temple go,
They hymn "Praise Squire from whom all blessings flow,
Oh, may he prosper! May his brood increase,
And death to all who are not Dull as he is!"
Up from glad Earth the chorus swells again,
"Praise Squire, Praise Squire," we hear the swift refrain
That leaps like fire from every school and college,

From stately London home or Cotswold
Cottage,
Wherever poet meets a poet brother
(Or makes an income by reviewing each
other).
The echo alters to " We never tire
Of hearing Squire on Shanks and Shanks
on Squire."

Oh, but these Goddesses are in the right
In praising Squire. For they are his
delight.
A demigod himself, he placed above
For public worship and for private love
(And for the press to praise) this radiant
pair;
For them, he fashioned in his secret lair
(Though they inspired the precious, small,
first bud)
That gummy, muddy " Lily of Malud."
And for the sake of Dullness placed apart
The gift of parody, his only art.
Instead, for them, he makes the Georgian
book,
Observer, Land-and-Water, and Outlook.

For love of Dullness have his loud bells
pealed
From Gentlewoman and the Lady's Field.
As tribute to Her, he now apes for us,
Squire the Sublime, Eagle Ridiculous!

The Goddesses appreciate his gifts,
But so that in his ranks there'll be no rifts
Send Mercury, their Messenger, with
thanks
To Freeman, Turner and their prize-boy,
Shanks
(For Mercury, the Messenger, is old,
Fat and obedient; does what he is told)
Together with a letter for their Lord
That Dullness hoped would strike a tender
cord
Within his heart, and make him plight his
troth,
—And Demigod already, how dull both!

And in this message lurked the latent
germ
Of many a poem for the coming term,
A poem Squire could write, and then his
school

Should echo, dunce to dunce, and fool to fool.
Mercury spread his wings. His outline swell'd,
Bellied, balloon-like, on the wind. He held
The precious missives, till he caught the glint
Of all but gold (of stucco, brass, and flint),
And flying down, delivered one epistle
Where, amid waving asphodel and thistle
Browse, foursquare, steadfast in their serried ranks,
The forms of Freeman, Turner, Graves and Shanks,
While reckless Rickward, and a thousand more,
Rally, and pass the word from bore to bore!

Behind these, showed the forms of many a villain,
Two Louis were there. One was our McQuilland,
Who writes for Scottish journals, Passing Show,

And many a paper that we do not know.
The other, proving by his name, when told,
That all that does not glitter is not gold,
Skulking behind that black enormous building
Is Louis Golding,—better, Louis Gilding.
Near by, another surly Scot—Moncrieff
Who brings the Early Saxon songs to grief,
Who translates Boewolf, and then (oh epitaph!)
Has on the cover his own photograph.
(And dear this is to Dullness in her dotage
For she created Moncrieff in her image.)
These warrior-writers now unite to sink
Their petty quarrelling in slinging ink.
But, Squire, who usually gives out each ticket,
Has been away to-day playing cricket
To aid Church funds; so, in his room, unseen,
Rests Mercury, and reads a magazine
In which much praise of Dullness now appears.
He looks to see the name, alas! there leers

His face, his own, that once spelt speed
and joy
—Drawn on the cover by the office-boy!!

* * * * *

The Messenger of Gods rests where he
read,
In awful peace. For Mercury is dead,
As dead can be, as dead as Anne-the-
Queen,
—Or as that dullest, deadest magazine!

* * * * *

* Owing to the infectious prevalence of writing poems on classic themes, Mr. Augustine Rivers has chosen the above title, and has much pleasure in announcing the following classic poems in preparation :—" Paris & Helen," " Daphnis & Chloe," " Hero & Blunder," " Pyramis & Thisbe," " Bottom & Mare's Nest," "Jolly Old Squire & Shanks' Mare," and " Six in a Four-Wheeler."

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Consisting of some remarks on poetry and its criticism and including the sad story of Eunuch Arden.

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